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SUBJECT: ISRAELI DEFMIN DISCUSSES PEACE PROCESS, IRAN  
DURING VIENNA VISIT

¶1. (U) Israeli Defense Minister and Deputy PM Barak met with Chancellor Faymann, President Fischer, DefMin Darabos, and FM Spindelegger during a low-key December 14-15 visit to Vienna.

During a joint press conference after their meeting, Barak and Darabos emphasized their support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. They also stressed the strong bilateral relationship between their two countries, though Barak noted that the relationship had experienced "ups and downs," an apparent reference to tensions arising from the election of Kurt Waldheim as Austrian President in 1986 and the 1999 Austrian parliamentary elections that led to a government including the far-right Freedom Party. Spindelegger also called for a two-state solution after his meeting with Barak, adding that lack of progress in the peace process was "creating hopelessness and playing into the hands of extremists." Spindelegger urged Israel to cease settlement construction and called on the Palestinians to unify and refrain from violence against Israel.

¶2. (U) Wolfgang Lapuh, MFA Middle East Deputy Director, told us on December 17 that Spindelegger asked Barak what Austria could do to help revive the peace process. Barak replied that Austria, working through the EU, should encourage the Palestinians to return to the table for discussions. He also recommended that the EU encourage President Abbas to remain in office. Spindelegger asked about press reports suggesting that the Palestinians might unilaterally declare a state. Barak noted that the media had misrepresented the Palestinians' statements, but said that the Labor Party, which he leads, would have no problem with such a declaration. He suggested that a unilateral declaration would help clarify the parties to a two-state solution.

¶3. (U) Barak also told Spindelegger that Israel has information indicating that Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei might be willing to announce a two-month moratorium on uranium enrichment, Lapuh said.

¶4. (SBU) Barak also attended a December 14 event at which the World Jewish Congress (WJC) awarded the Nahum Goldmann Medal to Vienna Mayor Michael Haupl. WJC President Ronald Lauder said in a statement that Haupl was chosen for his efforts in reviving Jewish life in Vienna, including his support for the Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial and the construction of Jewish schools and other institutions, as well as his denunciations of anti-Semitism. (Note: The event received minimal press coverage. It appears that Haupl, facing election in 2010, did not want to call too much attention to the award. He likely determined that it would not be to his advantage to be associated with a Jewish organization, particularly the WJC, which many Austrians resent for its criticism of Austria during the Waldheim affair.)  
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